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ABSTRACT

The protocol materials on phonology in black nonstandard dialects prepared for use by a group of elementary teacher trainees are described. The thirteen phonological concepts studied include: (1) free variation of sounds or full phonemes; (2) the loss of the /r/ phoneme, except in initial position in a syllable; (3) the omission of final single consonants and the final consonant of a consonant cluster; (4) the partial loss of a final consonant; (5) the loss of initial and medial consonants; (6) the intrusion of consonants, forming variant initial and final consonant clusters; (7) the syllabic reduction; (8) the substitution of static vowels for diphthongs; (9) the lengthening of a nasal after a vowel in order to avoid consonant clusters; (10) the substitution of a nasalized vowel for a nasal plus another consonant; (11) the transposition of sounds and junctures; (12) the nature of pitch phonemes; and (13) the nature of syllabic stress. It was hoped that these materials would give teachers a better change to understand the black child who speaks a black dialect and that these protocols, when disseminated together with the syntax and morphology protocol materials, would make a packet of linguistic material helpful to the teacher. (HOD)

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AN EXTENSION OF THE SOUTHERN ILLINOIS BLACK DIALECT PROJECT INTO PHONOLOGY

The background of the Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville Black Dialect Project has been explained by Dr. Love. She has also explained the nature and content of the protocol materials on the morphology and syntax of the Black Dialect which were developed as a result of the work of the project. It is clear that the materials were designed to be used in the classroom to give pre-service and in-service teachers greater insight into the nature of some of the dialectal features which would probably confront them from time to time if the home and playground language of their pupils was the Black Dialect.

All elementary teacher trainees at Southern Illinois University are required to take a basic course in linguistics. In my section of these classes I first field tested the protocol materials for the project and more recently I have been using them as a regular part of the course. I have also used them in other classes in linguistics to illustrate dialectal differences.

The tapes and printed materials prepared to present the protocols of the syntactic and morphological concepts were very successful, in my estimation, in terms of the stated goals for the project; namely, to awaken an awareness through example of the nature of important basic concepts which are involved in the larger concept of "Black Dialect". The results of the quizzes or tests at the end of each protocol unit showed that a high percentage of the students easily understood the concept that the unit was attempting to elucidate. In addition, many

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students openly and voluntarily expressed appreciation for the units not only because they understood the protocol concepts about the Black Dialect better, but because the instruction brought home the general nature of syntax and morphology, in some apsects, better than had been done by other types of linguistic instruction up to that point.

On the other hand there were some objections on the part of the students. They stated that even though they understood the teaching points of the tapes (that is, the syntactic and morphologic concepts) and could identify them rather easily as they listened to the children's voices, there was something more than just the static on the tapes and the teaching problems that was interferring with communication. It did not take long to discover that the interference had its source in the phonological system of the dialect.

A survey of current and past literature on the subject of the Black Dialect brought to light the fact that although many of the writers seem to have stressed the differences in morphological and syntactical usages in comparing the Black Dialect with the so-called General Dialect, they often also tucked into the book somewhere a section on phonological variations. Except for one text which purported to train people of the entertainment world in the art of speaking Black Dialect, my reaction, in perusing the literature available to me, was that for too little attention had been given to the interference in communication caused by differences in the phonological systems of the two dialects.

It was obvious that if the teachers in the areas where Black Dialect is spoken were to adequately understand the dialect, and to be able to counteract in a positive way the influences of these differences

in the communicative process, that protocol materials relative to the concepts of phonology were also needed. This is not to say that an entire course in phonology would necessarily be taught in this manner. Certain concepts, however, could perhaps most easily be introduced by using the protocol method of instruction.

Although the contract with the Office of Education did not call for a phonological analysis of the language of the children used on the Black Dialect tapes, it was decided by some of the workers on the project that such an analysis was necessary. In preparing for the project as many as five hundred tapes were made. This would no doubt provide enough data to last a linguist at least one life time if not several. It was decided because of the limited time available, that only the language of the children speaking on the first protocol tapes would be analyzed, at least as a first step, in preparing the phonology protocols. Ideally, the phonology of the language of each of the children speaking on the tapes should have been analyzed separately. But the children were living in the same city, East St. Louis, and attending the same schools. Therefore, it was decided as a matter of convenience to consider their responses as representative of a single speech community and to analyze their speech as a group in an effort to arrive at, not so much a statement of the phonological system of the group, but as a source of concepts related to phonology which could be developed into meaningful protocol materials.

The results of the phonological analysis of the tapes showed that this particular group of children were capable of using all the segmental phonemes which are normally considered to be used in the General

American Dialects of English. In regard to the suprasegmental phonemes, it appears that the children were using four levels of stress, sometimes in a manner not unlike the stress patterns of General English. However, in General English dialects, a heavy stress is often accompanied by a rise in pitch, and especially by a lengthening of the vowel of the syllable that is stressed. For the most part the children depended on increased loudness for stress and occasionally or even often on prolongation of the vowel. It was very very seldom, however, that stress was accompanied with a pitch rise. This may have been because of the inescapable artificiality of the environment during the taping sessions. Unlike General Dialect speakers these children did not use stress-timed rhythm very much. The rhythm pattern of the children's speech was often so changed from standard practice, that it was often difficult and sometimes impossible to keep up with the flow of speech. Of course, the tapes could be stopped and a passage repeated until the message became clear. Very few of my students comprehended the intended thought of these passages unless they were repeated several times.

Just as in standard English, each terminal juncture indicating the end of a clause was usually preceded by a heavy level of stress, and often, but by no means always with a lengthening of a vowel. Although this facet of the children's speech was different, it did not seriously impede understanding.

Some of the books on the subject of Black Dialect mention a special "lilt" in the intonation. The comments indicated that there is greater variety in the intonation patterns of Black Dialect than

there is in General Dialect. Our analysis of the tapes did not corroborate this. For the most part, the children changed their intonation pattern very little. There was almost never a change from one phonemic pitch level to another. This may have been because of the circumstances of the recording sessions, or it may be the way these children feel it is proper to speak in a formal or an unusual situation. This aspect of the tapes deserves further study, but it is perhaps significant to note that this feature was mentioned by my students as one of the reasons they found the children difficult to understand.

It turned out that there were not any questions asked by the children on the tapes. If there had been some, more meaningful variation in pitch contours might have emerged.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the analysis was the extent to which the phonotactic system of the speech of these children had been expanded or changed from the General Dialect, or at least where they differ at this point in history. The children were capable of using the distribution of the segmental phonemes, but they made many substitutions for sounds that were not permitted in the General Dialect. Although speakers of General Dialect often simplify consonant clusters and omit one or more syllables in normal rapid conversation, the children extended a great deal the situations in which this occurred a great deal. In addition, loss of a final consonant or, as was often the case, an extremely delicate, almost inaudible pronunciation of the final consonant was rather common.

An analysis of the hundreds of tapes that had been made for use in the writing of the Protocol materials for syntax and morphology

might have yielded further information about the phonology of the children's speech. But by the time the small number of tapes that were actually used in the protocol presentation had been analyzed, the speech features found were for the most part redundant, and little new material was discovered. Therefore on the results of the present analysis it has been tentatively decided to prepare protocol-type presentations of the following phonological concepts which appeared rather frequently on the tapes. There are thirteen concepts which it is felt pre-service and in-service teachers in the elementary level might profitibly study. The order of presentation is also tentative.

Concept 1. Free variation of sounds or full phonemes. Although the phonotactic rules of Standard English often requires or permits free variation of allophonic variants of a phoneme, free substitution of full phonemes is restricted even though not always prohibited. The Black Dialect phonotactic rules permit much greater freedom in the free variation of full phonemes. Some examples that appeared in the tapes which do not ordinarily occur in General Dialect are

/-v-/ for /-ð-/ as in /əv ɪn/ for /əðɪn/; /-f/ for /-θ/ as in /tiyf/ for /tiyθ/;

/n- for /ð-/ as in /nɛ/ for /ðɛ/ and /næt/ for /ðæt/.

Concept 2. The loss of the /r/ phoneme, except in initial position in a syllable. Most teacher-trainees will have little trouble with this concept since its use is rather common in many regional varities of the General Dialect.

Concept 3. Omission of final single consonants and the final consonant of a consonant cluster. Although speakers of the general dialect occasionally omit consonants, the rules are such less permissive than in the Black Dialect as reflected in the tapes. For example; /-t/ is

often omitted in such words as "went" and "don't"; /-l/ is often omitted in words such as "ball" and "all".

Concept 4. Partial loss of a final consonant. Sometimes part of the features of a final consonant will be present but not all. An example of this is the use of delicate general oral cavity friction for the plural and possessive inflections of nouns. Many speakers of the General Dialect declare that the sound is not there at all, but the tapes reveal the feature of friction, though not the strident type of friction usually present for the plural and possessive morphemes in the General Dialect, as well as for the third person singular present morpheme of verbs.

Concept 5. Loss of initial and medial consonants. It is well known that /l/ is omitted in words like "help" and "self". The tapes revealed that initial consonants were lost in words like "don't" and "the" which were pronounced as /ɑwn/ and /ɜ/ respectively.

Concept 6. Instrusion of consonants, forming variant initial and final consonant clusters. For example, occasionally the word "sister" was pronounced "slister". So-called over-inflection of nouns and verbs often results in an unexpected consonant cluster, as far as the speaker of the General Dialect is concerned.

Concept 7. Syllabic reduction. This is accomplished in several ways by the children. One prominent way is to omit short words. (This is rather common in the General Dialect too, but not always in the same environments as on the tapes.) Another way was the use of nasalized vowels; for example, /ɑɪ̃ pleɪ wɪ̃/ for "I don't play with them."
A third way is to use syllabic consonants, which is also rather common

in the General Dialect these days. The reduction of normal open juncture to close or plus juncture occasionally resulted in the reduction in the number of syllables within an utterance.

Concept 8. The substitution of static vowels for diphthongs or glided vowels. For example, /flæ:/ or fla:/ for "fly".

Concept 9. Lengthening of a nasal after a vowel in order to avoid consonant clusters. For example /hæn:/ for "hand" and /wɪn:/ for "wind".

Concept 10. The substitution of a nasalized vowel for a nasal plus another consonant. For example: /wɔ̃/ for /wɔnt/.

Concept 11. The transposition of sounds and junctures. A case in point was /brɪ batlɔs/ for "beer bottles". Of course the pronunciation of the second word could have resulted from a spelling pronunciation.

Concept 12. The nature of pitch phonemes in Black Dialect.

Concept 13. The nature of syllabic stress in Black Dialect.

It is hoped that gaining an understanding of these basic concepts will greatly help teachers who have had little previous contact with the Black Dialect, but who are teaching children who may feel more comfortable with their home dialect or peer-group dialect than they do with the dialect taught in the school room. The purpose of the protocols is not to impell the teachers to add the phonological rules of Black Dialect to their own speech, but to give them at least a better chance to understand the Black child who speaks the Black dialect, and assist him in acquiring the linguistic rules of the General Dialect, if he chooses. The teacher of children who speak the Black Dialect

should know the phonological systems of both dialects, in order to teach effectively and do his job well.

It is hoped that when the phonological protocols have been developed they can be desseminated together with the syntax and prophology protocol material, thus making a package of linguistic material/ that would be very helpful to the teacher.